

## DANGEROUS MENTALLY ILL OFFENDERS

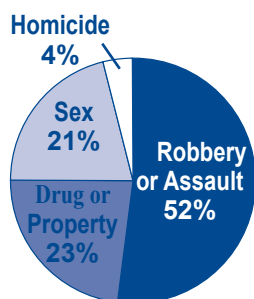
BY FRANK RETHERFORD

Many of you may recall an incident in 1997 when, following a Seattle Mariner's baseball game, a retired firefighter was fatally stabbed while walking with his family. This was an unprovoked attack by a mentally ill person. This incident created a public outcry in regard to mentally ill persons who had histories of violence and who were not adequately provided for in the criminal justice and mental health systems. One good thing that came out of this tragedy was that it prompted new legislation and extensive changes in identifying and transitioning Dangerous Mentally Ill Offenders (DMIO's) from prisons.

In 1999, legislation was passed to improve the process of identifying and providing additional mental health treatment for mentally ill offenders who are being released from the Department of Corrections (DOC) and who pose a threat to public safety. A DMIO is defined as a person with a mental disorder who has been determined to be dangerous to self or others.

**The DMIO Program:** Utilizes interagency collaboration to promote a safe transition to the community; DOC, Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Regional Support Networks, and treatment providers plan and deliver support services; Funding provides for additional services that would not otherwise be available upon release from prison; Services are not only for additional case management and mental health treatment but also to address needs, such as chemical dependency treatment, vocational and educational services, living skills, sex offender treatment and housing; DSHS also assists by expediting access to state and federally funded medical and financial services for which DMIO participants are often eligible; Program is designed to serve participants for the first five years after prison release.

The March 2005 report, "Washington's Dangerous Mentally Ill Offender Law: Was Community Safety Increased?", gives an impartial evaluation of the program. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) and the Washington Institute for Mental Illness Research and Training performed the evaluation. See pie chart for the types of DMIO offenses that led to the offender's current term of incarceration.



The researchers compared outcomes of DMIO participants released from prison with a similar group of offenders from the Community Transition Study (CTS<sup>1</sup>). **The DMIO program was found to substantially reduce felony recidivism (rate of reconviction for a new offense).** This is a good thing, helping to keep the public safe.

The researchers found that DMIO participants received social and financial services far more quickly and steadily as compared to those offenders in the CTS group. Setting up medical coverage before release allowed most participants to receive services upon release. An interagency team was identified for each participant as soon as possible to establish arrangements for the person's treatment and support in the community. This helps the participant with their special mental health needs, which also helps public safety.



## FOR YOUR INFORMATION..

### PUBLICATION OF THE MONTH

For mental health issues in corrections, take a look at the February 2005 issue of Corrections Today magazine, "Mental Health in Corrections: The Continuing Dilemma".

### WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

For more background on the DMIO program, visit DOC's Community Protection Unit web site at [http://www.doc.wa.gov/CPU/dmio\\_index.htm](http://www.doc.wa.gov/CPU/dmio_index.htm).

### DEFINITION OF THE MONTH

Health: The definition of health by the World Health Organization (WHO) is as follows:

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

### DOC MONTHLY STATISTICS AS OF MARCH 31, 2005

<b>CONFINEMENT POPULATION</b> .....	17,422
Total Confinement .....	15,743
Work Release .....	692
In State Rented Beds .....	457
Out of State Rented Beds .....	530
<b>COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS POPULATION</b>	
ACTIVE SUPERVISION .....	28,289
RMA .....	7,616
RMB .....	6,719
RMC .....	2,266
RMD .....	10,148
Unclassified .....	1,540
MONETARY .....	111
INACTIVE STATUS .....	16,040

### ESCAPES FROM SECURITY LEVELS 2-5, FOR FY05

	Date	Type	Return
Coyote Ridge CC	07/14/04	Facility	07/15/04
Olympic CC	08/13/04	Facility	-----
WCCW	11/04/04	Work Crew	11/04/04
Larch CC	12/20/04	Work Crew	01/30/05
Tacoma PR	01/19/05	Facility	02/22/05

### TO CONTACT PLANNING AND RESEARCH

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An initial cost-benefit estimate resulted in an overall return of 74 cents per dollar of program cost. The researchers mentioned that only a longer-term evaluation would be able to assess the full impact of the program.

The researchers stated that their program evaluation must be regarded as preliminary since it measured results over the first 18 months of a five-year treatment program. Their evaluation concluded: "To date, the program appears to be accomplishing its principal objectives: reductions in the felony recidivism rates of DMIO participants and improved delivery of social services and safe housing..."

To find out more about the researchers' evaluation visit the WSIPP web site at <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov>.

<sup>1</sup> Lovel et al., "Recidivism and Service Use Among Mentally Ill Offenders";  
 Gagliardi et al., "Forecasting Recidivism in Mentally Ill Offenders."